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Letter dated 24 March 2004 from the Permanent Representative of Côte d'Ivoire to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to enclose herewith the text of the message addressed to the nation on 23 March 2004 by President Laurent Gbagbo, concerning the current socio-political situation (see annex).

I should be grateful if you could arrange to have the text of this letter and its annex published as a Security Council document.

(*Signed*) Philippe **Djangone-Bi**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 24 March 2004 from the Permanent Representative of Côte d'Ivoire to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Message from the President of the Republic concerning the socio-political situation

23 March 2004

For the past three weeks the political climate in Côte d'Ivoire has been giving rise to legitimate feelings of concern on the part of the Ivorian people and international public opinion alike. On Wednesday, 3 March 2004, we learned through the press that the ministers of the Parti democratique de Côte d'Ivoire (PDCI) were suspending their participation in the activities of the Coalition Government, Government Council and Council of Ministers.

We subsequently learned that the suspension had been motivated by the fact that the PDCI had demanded to assume the direction of the Abidjan Port Authority and had not been able to. Other parties and movements which had signed the Linas-Marcoussis and Accra II Agreements supported the PDCI.

One week later, on 17 March, immediately after the Government prohibited street demonstrations by means of a decree issued by the Council of Ministers on 11 March 2004, those same parties and movements decided to hold a march, followed by a meeting on the Place de la Republique on Thursday, 25 March.

Yet it was only yesterday, Monday, 22 March at 6.45 p.m., following a meeting they asked for the evening before, on 21 March, that those parties and movements handed me a "Memorandum of Political Signatories of the Linas-Marcoussis and Accra II Agreements".

The authors of that document, after taking stock of the laws and regulations adopted, refer to malfunctionings in the activities of the Government of National Reconciliation.

I therefore received the memorandum yesterday and a meeting was scheduled for Monday, 29 March, for the purpose of examining the various issues raised.

I would like to point out that the decision to hold a demonstration was taken before the initiators' grievances were even brought to the attention of the Head of State. Such an attitude is indicative of a clear will to defy the authority of the State.

This attitude is all the more surprising since I made a personal effort to speed up the adoption of draft laws by the Government in implementation of the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement and, in a letter dated 19 February 2004, convened an extraordinary session of the National Assembly for the purpose of consideration.

The following are the laws deriving from the Linas-Marcoussis Agreement which have been adopted by the Government and transmitted to the National Assembly to date:

Draft law authorizing the President of the Republic to ratify the additional protocol amending and supplementing the provisions of article 7 of the protocol on free movement of persons, right of residence and of establishment, signed at Ouagadougou on 30 June 1989, transmitted to the National Assembly on 11 December 2003.

Draft law authorizing the President of the Republic to ratify the additional protocol relating to the implementation of the third stage (right of establishment) of the protocol on free movement of persons, right of residence and of establishment, signed at Banjul on 29 May 1990, transmitted to the National Assembly on 11 December 2003.

Draft law relating to the declaration of income, assets and liabilities of the President of the Republic, transmitted to the National Assembly on 19 February 2004.

Draft law amending articles 35 and 55 of the Constitution, adopted by the Council of Ministers pending a special constitutional procedure.

Draft law amending and supplementing Act No. 61-415 of 14 December 1961 establishing the Ivorian nationality code, as amended by Act No. 72-852 of 21 December 1972. I have decided to submit this draft to a referendum.

Draft law concerning the amendment of article 26 of Act No. 98-750 of 23 December 1998 relating to rural land, transmitted to the National Assembly on 8 March 2004.

Draft law establishing the National Human Rights Commission, transmitted to the National Assembly on 19 February 2004.

Draft law amending Act No. 2002-03 of 3 January 2002 relating to the identification of persons and residence of aliens in Côte d'Ivoire and abrogating Act No. 98-448 of 4 August 1998, transmitted to the National Assembly on 19 February 2004.

Draft law amending Act No. 2001-634 of 9 October 2001 establishing the composition, organization, powers and functions of the Independent Electoral Commission, transmitted to the National Assembly on 19 February 2004.

Hence the Linas-Marcoussis process is well under way and progressing. And it is because we are making progress that the United Nations decided to send Blue Helmets to help us implement the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme and prepare for the 2005 elections.

We therefore have an historic opportunity to resolve the crisis. The international community is extending its hand to help us resolve the crisis. We do not have the right to disappoint it. We do not have the right to refuse its hand.

Neither do we have the right to prolong the suffering of our country, which is an important country not just for Ivorians but for West Africa as a whole.

We do not have the right to create despair when we have everything we need to create hope.

This is why I am calling on everyone to show self-control and place the nation foremost. Now that grievances have been expressed and talks scheduled, I call on everyone to be reasonable, and especially, to abandon actions whose consequences might seriously jeopardize the gains we have made in the peace process.

Laurent **Gbagbo**
President of the Republic